

Concord School District Board of Education
Board Work Session #10
March 25, 2019

Board members Jennifer Patterson, *President*, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Jim Richards, Pam Wicks, Danielle Smith, Liza Poinier, Nancy Kane

Absent Barb Higgins

Administration: Terri L. Forsten, *Superintendent*, Donna Palley, *Assistant Superintendent*, Jack Dunn, *Business Administrator*, Matt Cashman, *Director of Facilities*, Larry Prince, *Director of Human Resources*

Board President Jennifer Patterson called the meeting to order at 5:46 p.m., noting that the purpose of the meeting was to review feedback from the two public hearings and as a question-and-answer session for Board members. Ms. Patterson noted that she and other Board members had received a great deal of feedback from the public. Superintendent Terri Forsten reviewed the agenda:

- Budget goals
- Review of proposed positions
- Recommendations for reductions and adjustments to proposed budget
- Plastic ware, etc. – Food Service
- Board member comments, questions, proposals
- Public comment
- Public information
- Future meetings

Superintendent Forsten briefly reviewed the 2019-2020 budget goals:

- Regular education
 - Class sizes within policy guidelines
 - Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs)
- Curriculum, instruction and assessment
 - New materials for reading instruction
 - Competency grading and reporting
- Student Services
 - Elementary Assistant Principal positions
 - Program development for 3R elementary
- Technology
 - One-to-one devices for all students
 - Telephone replacement
- Capital purchases and debt service
 - 5% operating budget for debt service, including new proposed debt for roof replacements

- Community relations
 - Success stories in Concord public schools
 - Middle school facility plan

Superintendent Forsten provided an overview of proposed positions and staff changes within the District overall and at the high school.

OVERVIEW – STAFF CHANGES

LINE	FTE	DESCRIPTION	IMPACT ON CLASS SIZE OR PROGRAMS	SUPERINTENDENT'S BUDGET
1	1.0	Central Office SPED Admin Assistant	Assist Increasing Medicaid Revenue	64,518
2	1.0	CHS Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) Coordinator	New Position – 6hr/per day	103,707
3	1.0	CHS Program Assistant Online Instruction	New Position	29,204
4	.09	Drop Out Prevention (DOP) Coordinator	Moved Balance of Position to General Fund	10,982
5	5.0	Assistant Principals of Student Services	New Positions – Elementary Level, replacing SPED Coordinators	778,412
6	-2.5	Special Education Coordinators	Elimination of Special Ed Coordinators	(-337,300)
7	1.0	Elementary Special Education Teacher	New Position – Elementary Level, 3R Program at BMS	92,353
8	.47	Pre-School	New Position – Beaver Meadow School	40,631
9	.30	Pre-School Special Education	New Budget Position – Beaver Meadow School (added in FY19)	12,683
10	1.0	Director of Communications	New Position – Central Office	106,529
11	.06	Elementary Family Literacy	Loss of one-time funding – Elementary Level	6,440
12	.18	MBS Family Literacy	Loss of one-time funding – MBS	9,356
13	.28	Pre-School Instructional Assistant	Increase FTE at Beaver Meadow School	6,188
14	3.95	Instructional Assistants	New Positions – Christa McAuliffe (added in FY19 using reduction in contracted services)	83,864
15	-	Drop Out Prevention Coordinator	Reduction in number of Days from 215 to 185	(15,668)
16	-1.0	Drop Out Prevention Asst. Coordinator	Reduction of Assistant Coordinator Position	(44,860)
	11.83			947,039

She noted that the CHS vacancy represents the budget difference between a retiree and a new position.

REVIEW OF PROPOSED POSITIONS AT CONCORD HIGH SCHOOL

LINE	FTE	DESCRIPTION	IMPACT ON CLASS SIZE OR PROGRAMS	SUPERINTENDENT'S BUDGET
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3	1.0	CHS Program Assistant Online Instruction	New Position	29,204
4	.09	Drop Out Prevention (DOP) Coordinator	Moved Balance of Position to General Fund	10,982
15	-	Drop Out Prevention Coordinator	Reduction in number of Days from 215 to 185	(15,668)
16	-1.0	Drop Out Prevention Asst. Coordinator	Reduction of Assistant Coordinator Position	(44,860)
17	1.0	Drop Out Prevention Student Services Coord.	Projected Loss of Grant Funds	51,033
19	1.0	CHS Vacancy	Vacancy	(6,423)
	3.09			127,975

Superintendent Forsten reminded Board members that the budget number put forward for a new position reflects the combined total of the position’s salary and benefits, not the position’s take-home pay. She reviewed proposed staffing changes at the elementary schools, explaining the need for additional preschool staff and highlighting the proposed Assistant Principal for Student Services positions. She recommended that the Board add the full-time Assistant Principal roles and remove the half-time Special Education Coordinator roles. She also explained that the proposed 3R Teacher position was initially proposed as a social worker, but it was decided that a teacher position was the greater

need. She made note of a teacher retiring from Abbot-Downing School and noted that that position would not be replaced, as a response to decreased enrollment.

Superintendent Forsten reviewed questions, concerns and issues raised during the two public hearings held last week, focusing on the conversation about the Assistant Principal for Student Services positions. She emphasized that although assistant principals are often thought of as being discipline-focused, that is not the goal of these positions, and that they would generally only address disciplinary matters in the absence of the building Principal. She noted that the hiring committee would consist of teachers, building Principal and at least one parent, and would not be an isolated process. Tom Croteau noted that there is an ever-increasing number of students who do not qualify for special education services but who are needy in terms of trauma or social-emotional development, and that these students would likely benefit from this additional support.

Jim Richards arrived at 5:57p.m.

Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley addressed the need for an administrator versus a coordinator. She explained that while the number one source of educational success is classroom teachers, the second most important thing is effective building administration. The distribution of resources, organization, support, feedback and evaluation are all critical school functions that administrators provide. She explained that while parents' experiences remain primarily with classroom teachers, administration is a critical piece in supporting and developing effective classroom teaching staff. She posed and answered a series of questions:

1. Will this be an administrator for student discipline?

No, the Principal would remain the primary administrator for student discipline.

2. Will my child with special education needs lose the personal connection with a lead person for special education?

No – in fact, he/she would likely gain a greater personal connection. The Assistant Principal would be a full-time position with a primary focus on supporting students with special education needs.

3. What will be the qualifications of the person hired in the Assistant Principal position?

Candidates must have an administrator's credential – Associate Principal or Special Education Administrator, to qualify for the position. Candidates would be expected to gain a Special Education Administrator's credential if they do not currently have it.

4. Why would the District increase the number of administrators in the elementary schools?

There is an increased challenge of supporting children with educational disabilities who have experienced trauma, who have not attended preschool or who are struggling at the elementary level. We need to add a layer of educational leadership to improve support in the elementary school programs.

5. What is the positive evidence for increasing the special education administration?

As the positions at the middle and high school have transitioned to Special Education Directors there has been a positive impact on the costs associated with special education, as there are fewer students placed out of the district, and decreased need for contracted behavior specialist services. The research shows that strong leadership is a critical element of student success.

Superintendent Forsten reviewed proposed Central Office positions, which include a Special Education Administrative Assistant and Director of Communications position. She again noted that the budget numbers reflect the combined total of the positions' salaries and benefits. She noted that the net change in Central Office staff has decreased by eight since 2009.

REVIEW OF PROPOSED POSITIONS FOR CENTRAL OFFICE

LINE	FTE	DESCRIPTION	IMPACT ON CLASS SIZE OR PROGRAMS	SUPERINTENDENT'S BUDGET
1	1.0	Central Office SpEd Admin Assistant	Assist Increasing Medicaid Revenue (projected \$75,000 in revenue)	64,518
10	1.0	Director of Communications	New Position – Central Office	106,529
	2.0			171,047

	<u>Director of Communications</u>	<u>Special Education Admin Assistant</u>
Salary	70,000	36,643
FICA	5,355	2,650
NHRS	7,819	3,870
Health	21,690	21,690
Dental	1,665	1,665

HISTORY

DESCRIPTION	2009	2019	CHANGE
Central Office Positions	47	39	-8

Note: Since 2009, 2 positions have been added, and 10 have been eliminated

Superintendent Forsten reviewed several recommendations for reductions to the proposed budget, including reductions of the Superintendent's contingency fund and Bill White Associates contracted services, a total proposed reduction of \$197,874.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDUCTIONS TO PROPOSED BUDGET

DESCRIPTION	SUPERINTENDENT'S BUDGET
Superintendent's Contingency	13,929.00
Bill White Contracted Services	150,000.00
CRTC – Extra PayScreen Error, salary & FICA	22,945.00
Transmitter - Transportation	8,500.00
Airphone	2,500.00
TOTAL	\$ 197,874.00

Superintendent's Contingency

- This fund is made up of the following positions:

FTE	POSITION	AMOUNT
1	Teacher's	96,591
1	Teacher's	96,591
1	Program Assistant	36,577
1	Instructional Assistant	34,980
1	Tutor	41,332
5		306,071

Bill White Contracted Services

- Through the work of the high school Special Education Director, we are able to move from contracting for three behavior specialists from BW to employing three of our staff who have gained expertise to support students.

Business Administrator Jack Dunn addressed feedback given by several Broken Ground School students at the public hearing on March 18 regarding the use of plastic serving ware in Food Service.

Budget:

- Straws: plastic .002 cents (\$40) vs. paper .02 cents (\$400)
- Utensils: forks, knives, spoons - \$425 per elementary school
- Utensil rack \$200-\$300
- 3-hourr position \$8,221 per elementary school (dishwashing, other?)

Note: Still need to estimate Water/Sewer/Electric/Repairs/Maintenance. Also need to calculate savings from plastic reduction – .008 cents per utensil, for example, forks used with every lunch as of today @ BGS - \$210.59.

Cereal dispensers vs. bowl pack cereal

- Increased cost of compostable bowls, or increase in labor cost if using washable bowls
- Increased custodial labor due to spillage from dispenser
- Space for dispensers
- Decrease in cereal assortment offered
- Slowing down the breakfast line flow, thus allowing students less time to eat
- The FDA Food Code Regulation states in 3-301.11 Section B the following:
“Except when washing fruits and vegetables as specified under 3-302.15 or as specified in paragraphs D and E of this section, food employees may not contact exposed, ready-to-eat food with their bare hands and shall use suitable utensils such as deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single-use gloves or dispensing equipment.”
- DIRECTOR: The City Health Inspector requires that the District use one of the options above in order to avoid bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods, such as vegetables and fruits. He has further stated that if ready-to-eat foods are available to students in a self-serve setting, they must be wrapped or in a container. Another option would be to provide students with the appropriate utensil to take the vegetable or fruit.
- Food Service has experimented with these options and found using a container is the most efficient way to serve the ready-to-eat items.

Dishwasher @ BGS

- Dishwasher does work
- Dishwasher is 40 years old – (est. \$50,000 - \$60,000)
- Grease trap drain is original to the building – summer replacement, cost \$4-\$6K
- Implemented biodegradable trays this year (*more expensive than styrofoam*)
 - Styrofoam .04 cents each
 - Biodegradable .09 cents each
- Plastic (washable) trays used at ADS, BMS, CMS
- Combination: MBS (full-day kindergarten – 6 lunches)
- Biodegradable: BGS (*dishwasher drain*)

Mr. Dunn explained that a grease trap replacement would be completed in this year's summer projects and that this will greatly improve the efficiency of the BGS dishwasher. He noted that the dishwasher is primarily used during meal preparation. Ms. Patterson asked if there are ways in which students could contribute in their schools toward these changes. Mr. Dunn explained that the District could look into a reduction in straw usage or disposable utensils and that this would involve discussions with the schools' Food Service cooks and staff about feasibility. Pam Wicks asked if the District currently participates in a recycling program and, if not, if this could be implemented. Mr. Richards asked for an analysis of what the District currently spends on waste disposal as a means of comparison to potential savings from any waste-reduction efforts. Danielle Smith explained that she found a great case study online from a Minnesota school district that switched from plastic to more environmentally-friendly options and created a savings of about \$23,000 over three years. She said she would forward the article to Board members. Ms. Wicks expressed appreciation for the discussion and emphasized that Board members do hear and discuss public and student feedback. She asked if the Food Service slide could be sent to teachers so they could show students that their voices are heard.

Ms. Patterson opened the meeting for Board member questions and comments and suggested a conversational approach to discuss public input and other thoughts and ideas. She added that she had heard, via the public hearings and email, concerns about seeing a budget increase as enrollment decreases, and that she understood these discussions and decisions lie with the Board. She explained that she viewed the proposal for the Assistant Principals positions as responsive to questions and concerns raised during the budget process last year. She explained that her main consideration has been whether the District should instead have a full-time Special Education Coordinator at each elementary school, and thinking about what the District gains specifically from adding an administrator. She explained that the conversations have helped her understand why the positions should be administrators, noting some compelling evidence from CHS when a Special Education Coordinator role was converted to an Assistant Principal several years ago and ended up in cost savings. She stated that she saw the role as primarily being about special education and Student Services and felt that this focus had not been made as clearly as it should have been. She explained that the titles may be off-putting to students and that perhaps should be changed to Special Education Assistant Principal, as special education is the core focus of the role. Regarding the Communications Director position, she explained that she felt this role reflected a need, but that the Board had choices to make about how best to address that need. She explained that this could mean rolling those services out incrementally, and possibly coordinating with the City for general outreach and communications about the District's accomplishments and activities.

Chuck Crush asked for specifics about why the special education budget was increasing from last year and what areas were creating the increase. Mr. Dunn explained that high school out-of-district placement costs were around \$300,000, noting that there were 11 students placed out-of-district by court mandate. He added that the Bill White Associates service reduction mentioned earlier in the meeting would result in substantial savings.

Ms. Palley clarified that employee salaries and benefits, including New Hampshire Retirement, were also part of this portion of the budget. Mr. Crush asked if any thought has been given to piloting an Assistant Principal of Student Services at one school for one year and observing those outcomes. Superintendent Forsten explained that this was considered but that the needs were urgent and extensive at each school, and it would be both difficult and unfair to choose one school over the others to receive this support. Mr. Crush asked for clarification about how the Assistant Principals would interact with needy students, and why there was a need for administrators versus trauma specialists, social workers or similar roles. Superintendent Forsten explained that she believed the schools currently have those excellent teachers, classroom and support staff in place and now the need is for leadership to help assess and support those staff members and programs that support needy student populations. Ms. Palley noted that adding staff is wonderful but that there must also be structure in place to support and develop them. She added that current Principals are active and directly involved with students.

Nancy Kane expressed concerns about the Assistant Principals potentially coming into the District without special education administration certification, and wondered if that should be prioritized over general administrator certification. Superintendent Forsten explained while she understood and valued those certifications, she did not want to narrow the scope so much that it might disqualify strong candidates who might not have those credentials right away.

Ms. Smith asked about the timeframe the District might expect those individuals to complete their certifications if they do not already have them. Superintendent Forsten explained that they would be expected to start work on those certifications right away, and that a great deal of training and support would be available as this is a critical shortage statewide. A specific timeframe would depend on the individual's background.

Liza Poinier asked for a snapshot of how current staff feel about the proposed Assistant Principal positions. Superintendent Forsten stated that she felt Principal Blinn represented his peers very well at the public hearing and that the other principals would be thrilled to have the additional support so they could focus on curriculum development, observation, assessment, and programming. She emphasized that special education student needs were the priority of these positions.

Mr. Croteau stated that he was in support of the Assistant Principal positions as they would both fulfill a special education need and allow the Principals to address additional needs, and that that these positions would fulfill everything currently being done by the Special Education Coordinators. He emphasized the value of having a full-time position at each school rather than a half-time position.

Ms. Wicks echoed Mr. Croteau's comments in support of the Assistant Principal positions and added that she had discussed the issue with her children's Principal and Special Education Coordinator. She explained that the Coordinator looked forward to seeing how programming could grow with the additional support. Ms. Wicks stated that adding more people would not solve a problem without an adequate leadership system in place and

that there was a huge value in someone being onsite full time rather than splitting time between schools as the Coordinators currently do.

Mr. Crush noted that the parents and teachers he had spoken with were opposed to the Assistant Principal positions. He explained that he felt it was a Herculean task to be in charge of special education and other needy populations as well as administrator duties. He asked that, if the budget passes as is and the Assistant Principals were added, what would be the metrics by which success would be measured for both special education and general education outcomes. Superintendent Forsten reminded Board members that the District was light on administrators compared to other school districts and that accountability, distribution and management of resources are administrator responsibilities. She referred to information from an earlier meeting that listed school districts across the state which employ Assistant Principals, and noted that most districts now have these positions. She added that these are challenging positions and that principals are often overwhelmed as the sole administrators in their schools.

Ms. Kane asked for clarification on the scope of work and breakdown of responsibilities for these positions, and wondered if the work was too much for one person. Superintendent Forsten referred to several slides shown during work session #3 which showed a breakdown of the Student Services populations in each school, including section 504, homeless, and ELL students. She emphasized that each school would retain its homeless liaison and ELL teachers and that those staff would not be changing. The Assistant Principals would provide support for those staff members, which would allow them to better service students.

Mr. Richards remarked that he had received a great deal of feedback over the last few weeks and was concerned about the cost of adding the proposed positions as it relates to the upcoming cost of the new middle school building and increasing the tax rate. He reflected on discussions around full-day kindergarten in years past and noted that the process of implementing that took several years. He added that delaying this year and rolling the positions out over a few years would be wise. He noted that in FY17, \$28 million was spent on general education, and this year was budgeted at \$30 million. Comparatively, the special education numbers increased by 50% in the same three-year span. He agreed that more information was needed.

Ms. Patterson explained that questions about measuring success are important, as well as how the additional support of Assistant Principals would increase the quality of educational experience for all students and not just special education students. She added that freeing up principals' time would be directly beneficial to regular education students. She agreed that it would be helpful to discuss additional ways to bring down costs and that perhaps other proposed positions could be implemented incrementally, but that the additional of Assistant Principals would benefit all students.

Mr. Crush explained that he had spoken with many parents of special education students and that none had expressed support for the Assistant Principal positions. He asked that the administration provide an explanation for these parents how the Assistant Principals would positively impact their own children's educational experience.

Mr. Richards explained that while he would prefer to not divide special education and regular education students, he understood it was necessary when developing the budget. He pointed out that the District has a limited amount of money to be distributed in the best way possible, and that the budget request for the new positions might delay the middle school project. He added that parents are an important part of the special education program and that their voices should be heard and taken into consideration.

Mr. Croteau echoed Mr. Richards' comment about the importance of parent opinion and clarified that he believed most of their concerns were based on a fear that special education students could lose some support. He explained that he did not feel this would happen as the Assistant Principals would actually be adding much-needed support to their schools. He said perception of these roles might have started badly, possibly due to the job titles, and understood why parents might feel concerned about a perceived loss of in-class staff while adding administrators. He added that it would be important to look at the special education budget's increase of 50% over the last three years to see how this came to be and where the money is allocated. He also echoed comments from Mr. Richards and Mr. Crush about determining outcome benchmarks for the success of the Assistant Principal positions.

Ms. Wicks referred to an earlier comment about the roles of the Assistant Principals as a "Herculean task" and pointed out that these tasks were currently being performed solely by the Principals. She noted that it would make sense for them to have the additional support. She echoed Ms. Patterson's earlier comments about the job titles perhaps being off-putting and not adequately emphasizing the value of a full-time person at each school dedicated to Student Services.

Mr. Crush clarified that the concern he has heard from parents was more about spending money on in-class paraprofessional staff (aides) rather than administrative positions.

Mr. Croteau asked that Mr. Dunn provide clarification on budget reductions that would offset the cost of the additional positions. Mr. Dunn referred to the reductions discussed earlier, noting that that list reflects the large items, and that there were additional, smaller items. He noted that the Medicaid position would be offset by revenue, so cutting that would result in "a wash." He explained that there had been a dedicated Medicaid billing person in 2009, but that this task had been transferred to the Student Services Administrative Assistant, who currently also handles Catastrophic Aid and preschool billing. He added that there is \$100,000 in revenue from the unassigned fund balance and that Payment In Lieu of Taxes revenue will increase by \$30,000, which will bring the total recommended reduction amount to just over \$300,000.

Ms. Patterson explained that she believed the Communications Director and ELO Coordinator roles could be rolled out incrementally and that this could provide additional budget savings.

Superintendent Forsten noted that she would review the evening's input and be ready for further discussion on March 27. Ms. Patterson thanked Board members for their thoughtful and civil input and opened the meeting for public comment.

Concord resident and parent Sarah Sadowski, who spoke at the March 18 public hearing about how she wanted to keep kindergarten ratios stay as low as possible, wanted to add that recent legislation has changed, mandating play-based instruction in kindergarten and that she wanted to be sure the administration took that information into account when determining class ratios.

Concord resident Carl Sargent said he believes the Assistant Principals should serve half-time as teachers and half-time as administrators. He suggested adding half-time special education staff. He said he believed CHS and BGS roofs should have lasted longer than 30 years and that perhaps compensation could be sought from the builders or architects. He suggested turning the HVAC systems off on weekends, holidays and by zone to save money on heating and cooling. He stated that one-third of Concord's population is tax-exempt and that the impact on the remainder of the property taxpayers should be taken into consideration when building District budgets. He said he felt that the architecture firm that built the elementary schools should be fired, and that the District could save \$20-\$30 million by using a different firm for the middle school project. Ms. Patterson clarified that an architecture firm had not yet been selected for the middle school project and that it would be put out to bid when the time comes.

Concord resident Betty Hoadley noted that she has been a Concord taxpayer for 58 years. She has provided Board members with data on tax-exempt properties, median household income, and comparisons of municipal and School District tax increases. She encouraged Board members to focus on ways to reduce the budget.

Concord resident Clint Cogswell said he has received community feedback, particularly regarding the Assistant Principal positions. He said he feels they would be a tremendous asset to schools, but understands concerns about adding positions in the face of decreasing enrollment. He suggested looking at a job description for the Communications Director position, and reviewing tasks that could be performed by a contracted service as a way to save money on that position.

Mr. Dunn reminded the public that the final budget meeting was scheduled for March 27. Mr. Croteau reminded Board members that their vote would be very important and that members should make every effort to attend. Mr. Dunn noted that meeting dates, materials and contact information is available on the District website, sau8.org.

The Board voted 8-0 to adjourn (moved by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Mr. Crush).

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Richards, *Secretary*
Lauren Hynds, *Recorder*